

Scoring Criteria for Application Narrative

Below are the 20 legislatively required elements of the charter school application and the scoring criteria which describe an “excellent,” “adequate,” and “inadequate” response to each element.

Each element has a number of total possible points that can be awarded. An element that is inadequate in all components would receive a “0;” and, an element that is excellent in all components would receive the total possible points available. It is likely that most of the elements of each application will be scored somewhere between those two points.

(Note: Because applicants are not required to list sponsors (item #13) or have a transportation plan (#19), the total points allocated for members of the governing body (#8) and sponsors are combined and the total points for health and safety compliance (#13) and transportation are combined.)

1. Statement defining the mission and goals of the proposed charter school

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The mission of the proposed charter school is highly compelling. The needs of the target population are well documented and the application strongly demonstrates how the proposed school will serve the community. The goals of the school are clear and measurable, demonstrate a strong commitment to high performance, and provide a strong basis for measuring the school’s progress. Taken together, these statements provide a particularly strong foundation on which to build an excellent public charter school.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The mission of the proposed charter school is clear, logical, and philosophically grounded. The needs of the community and target student population are recognized in general terms. The goals show a commitment to results and most of them are clear and measurable. Taken together, these statements present an understandable, reasonable, and promising argument for the establishment of a school.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The mission of the proposed charter school reveals the lack of development of a vision for the school. It fails to demonstrate that the school has a commitment to high expectations. The need for the proposed charter school in the community and/or the student population it intends to serve is not made clear. The goals are not clear or measurable, and demonstrate a lack of focus. The discussion of these issues lacks coherence and is not persuasive.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 10

2. Proposed instructional goals and methods

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The proposed instructional methods demonstrate a strong capacity to accomplish the school's goals. The school's educational theory is well-aligned with the target population's needs. The application provides evidence that such an approach will lead to high performance for all students, including those with special needs. The new federal legislation, *No Child Left Behind*, places an emphasis on using research-based practices in all of the nation's public schools. The instructional method of an excellent application will have a curriculum and instructional approach that are founded on well-researched educational practices. The application sets forth a comprehensive, well-structured program of study for students across all the school's grade levels.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The instructional goals and methods for the school are consistent with the mission of the school. The school's educational theory and instructional program reflects a basic understanding of education research and offers the potential for all students to improve performance. The proposed instructional methods are solid and suitable. The research-based curriculum explains at least in broad strokes the program of study for students across all the school's grade levels.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The proposed instructional methods and goals are incomplete or are presented with disconnected logic. The instructional methods are not always consistent with the school's missions and goals. The applicant presents little in the way of theory or evidence in support of the school's program. The curriculum is underdeveloped, not based on research-based educational practices, or not clearly described.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 20

3. Plan for evaluating student academic achievement and procedures for remedial action

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The proposed assessment program presents a clear and thoughtful plan for using multiple external and internal methods to measure student performance. The alignment of assessment with the school's mission and instructional program and the integration of assessment in the daily life of the school are well articulated. The applicants have demonstrated how performance data will be used to continuously improve instruction and to report the school's progress to outside audiences.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The proposed approach to assessment presents an acceptable plan for using multiple assessments to measure student performance. The proposal reflects a solid knowledge of assessment issues and confidence in using assessment results to improve instruction and report on progress to external audiences. The assessment plan is generally well aligned with the school's mission and instructional program and meets the requirements of the assessment system prescribed for Tennessee's public schools.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The assessment plan is lacking in necessary detail or is poorly conceived. The proposal demonstrates minimal understanding of student assessment issues. There is little connection between the assessment approach, instructional methods, and the school's mission. The applicant does not explain convincingly how assessment will be used to improve instruction or report on the school's progress.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 15

4. Operating budget

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The proposed operating budget presents very solid revenue projections which are sufficient to meet the anticipated expenditures for all five years. Estimated expenditures are more than sufficient to carry out the proposed activities of the school, to attract qualified staff, and to meet state and federal requirements. The budget presentation shows strong evidence of sound financial planning and management. The plan efficiently prioritizes resources to advance the school's mission and goals.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The proposed operating budget presents realistic assumptions of revenues and expenditures and demonstrates solid financial planning and management. Though the estimates may leave little room for error, budget is sufficient to carry out the school's activities, attract qualified staff, and meet state and federal requirements. The plan reflects the school's mission and goals.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The proposed operating budget shows little evidence of financial planning and management and fails to demonstrate that public funds will be used effectively. There may be efforts made at presenting detailed estimates of anticipated revenues and expenditures, however the document reveals minimal understanding of the financial requirements of operating a charter school. The budget is not sufficient to carry out the proposed school's activities, attract qualified staff, and meet state and federal requirements. Important parts of the school's mission and goals are not reflected in the budget.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 10

5. Audit method

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The proposal demonstrates that the school has the capacity and willingness to follow accepted accounting procedures. The proposed method provides evidence that a thorough audit of the school's administrative and program operations will be furnished.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The proposal demonstrates that acceptable effort will be made to follow accepted accounting procedures and to provide an audit of the school's administrative and program operations.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The proposal fails to provide evidence that the school will be able to provide an acceptable audit of the school's administrative and program operations. The proposed method provides little assurance that standard accounting practices will be followed.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 1

6. Timetable

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The start-up timetable provides a realistic and detailed plan that will lead to a successful and timely opening of the school. The school's daily and annual calendars are very detailed and show strong evidence of planning and time management. The proposed calendars present a thoughtful and academically rich use of time and are consistent with the school's mission and goals. The school has made good progress towards securing facility financing and identifying a facility or site that is well suited to the proposed educational program and the needs of all students.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The start-up timetable provides a realistic plan from charter approval to the initial day of operation. The school's daily and annual calendars are fairly detailed and usually connected to the school's mission and goals.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The proposal fails to provide a clear and realistic timeline for getting the school into operation. Little effort has been made in planning the school's daily and annual calendars.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 3

7. Governance and operations rules and policies

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The proposed rules and policies present a strong governance model that has the capacity for strong vision and action. The outstanding composition of the governing board and the clearly defined policies for terms, officers, and committees demonstrate strong leadership potential for the school. The plan for financial oversight is clear and appropriate.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The proposed rules and policies present an acceptable framework for organizing and managing the school. The governing board's rules and policies provide evidence for solid leadership. The decision-making process, though general, is acceptably designed as a starting point for a more fully developed governance model. The financial oversight plan is fairly well defined.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The rules and policies fail to demonstrate a solid understanding of governance and operational issues. The proposal fails to demonstrate how the board will exercise financial oversight, and the decision-making processes are inadequately described.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 7

8. Members of the governing body

An **EXCELLENT** application:

All of the selected governing board members possess outstanding experience and qualifications in areas such as education, management, finance, and nonprofit governance. Together as a whole, the members' expertise form the basis of an exceptional governing board. The full contact information and resumes for each board member is provided.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

Most of the selected board members have the experience and qualifications necessary to create and sustain a solid governing body in areas such as education, management, finance, and nonprofit governance. Together as a whole, the members' expertise provide sufficient basis for establishing a well-functioning board. The full contact information and resumes for each board member is provided.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The background information presented on the selected board members is inadequate and fails to demonstrate how each member will contribute to the school. Individually and as a group, members do not possess the expertise needed to lead a high-quality public school. Much of the contact information and resumes may be missing.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 13*

**the total points for this item consider both members of the governing body and sponsors (#13)*

9. Admissions policies

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The proposal provides a clear and detailed rationale for the school size, long-term enrollment plan, outreach and recruitment strategies, lottery, and nondiscriminatory admission policies. The planned outreach and recruitment strategies are strongly aligned with the school's mission and instructional program and have exceptional ability to reach a broad community of students, including families traditionally less informed about education options. The enrollment and admission policies ensure adequate enrollment and full accessibility of the school. The recruitment and admission policies demonstrate full compliance with state and federal law regarding nondiscrimination and open enrollment.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The proposal is based on solid assumptions and provides realistic enrollment projections. The outreach and recruitment strategies are manageable and consistent with the school's mission and planned instructional program. The school has developed an enrollment process that includes how seats will be allocated if demand exceeds capacity. The recruitment and admission policies appear to comply with state and federal law regarding nondiscrimination and open enrollment.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The projected enrollment lacks a clear rationale. The recruitment and admissions policies do not ensure adequate enrollment and accessibility of the school to all eligible students. The recruitment and admission policies fail to adequately demonstrate compliance with state and federal law regarding nondiscrimination and open enrollment.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 2

10. Code of behavior and discipline

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The proposed student behavior and discipline policies will help students thrive in a safe, structured, and supportive learning environment. The policies set clear standards for student behavior and specify the consequences of behavior for students. The school's approach to discipline is well developed has strong potential for encouraging positive behavior.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The proposed code of conduct will likely make the school a safe and orderly environment for student learning. The standards for student behavior and consequences are explained with some detail, and the application presents some understanding about the impact of environment on learning.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The proposed student behavior and discipline policies are incomplete, disconnected, or lack reasoning. The application does not articulate clear standards for and consequences of student behavior. The proposed policies and practices may not provide reassurance that students will be in a safe and orderly environment conducive to learning.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 5

11. Health and safety compliance

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The proposal presents a clear and comprehensive plan for meeting all applicable health and safety laws and regulations of the federal and state governments.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The proposal provides acceptable detail about how the school will comply with applicable health and safety laws and regulations of the federal and state governments.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The plan for compliance with applicable health and safety laws and regulations of the federal and state governments is incomplete or lacks clarity.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 2*

**the total points for this item consider both health and safety compliance
and transportation (#19)*

12. Employee qualifications

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The proposed human resource policies present a strong and compelling plan for creating an environment that is particularly conducive to high student achievement. The qualifications required of staff are clearly specified and aligned with the school's mission and instructional approach. The recruitment and selection procedures will allow for a well-staffed school with faculty that support the mission and effective student learning. The staff development plan has the capacity to boost the capacity of staff over time to help students learn. The staff evaluation program is well-crafted, research-based, and designed to foster continuous improvement for staff.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The proposed human resource policies are manageable and consistent with the school's mission and instructional program. Qualifications are reasonably well-specified. The recruitment and selection procedures should result in adequate and stable staffing. The staff development plan should help to improve teaching over time. The staff evaluation program has the ability to lead to improved teacher performance.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The proposed human resource policies fail to describe how staff qualifications and training will create a supportive learning environment. The proposal shows minimal understanding about the connection between teacher attributes and student performance. Plans for recruitment, selection, professional development, and evaluation are poorly specified or ill-conceived.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 2

13. Sponsors

{Note to reviewers: For this section, consider only those individuals and entities not considered in rating the application question 8.}

An **EXCELLENT** application:

All of the individuals and entities sponsoring the proposed school possess outstanding experience and qualifications. Together as a whole, their expertise demonstrates the capacity to achieve the school's mission. The full contact information and resume or organizational description for each individual or entity is provided.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The majority of the individuals and entities sponsoring the proposed school have the experience and qualifications necessary to effectively contribute to the school's mission. The full contact information and resume or organizational description for each individual or entity is provided.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The background on the individuals and entities sponsoring the proposed school is inadequate and fails to demonstrate how each will contribute to the school. Much of the contact information and resumes may be missing.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 13*

**the total points for this item consider both sponsors and members of the governing body (#8)*

14. Purchasing procedures and investments

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The policies and procedures regarding governing the deposit and investment of idle funds, purchasing procedures, and comprehensive travel regulations present convincing evidence of strong financial planning with careful attention to accounting and legal requirements. The procedures regarding the deposit and investment of idle funds ensure that the school will be able to account for such funds, maintain them securely, and use them only for appropriate purposes. The purchasing procedures and travel regulations create accountability in the use of public funds, ensuring that purchases and travel support the school's mission.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The policies and procedures regarding governing the deposit and investment of idle funds, purchasing procedures, and comprehensive travel regulations demonstrate acceptable financial controls. The procedures regarding the deposit and investment of idle funds ensure that the school will be able to account for such funds, maintain them securely, and use them only for appropriate purposes. The purchasing procedures and travel regulations demonstrate responsible use of public funds.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The policies and procedures regarding governing the deposit and investment of idle funds, purchasing procedures, and comprehensive travel regulations display minimal understanding of financial management and planning. The proposed school's funds would be subject to misappropriation or loss.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 1

15. Management/administrative plan

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The management and administration plan for the school demonstrates a strong vision and continuity of leadership. The roles and responsibilities of the board and the staff are clearly delineated. The school's organizational structure is well-described, with responsibility for major school activities clearly allocated. All of the individuals described here possess outstanding experience and qualifications that will help to achieve the mission of the school and the full contact information and resumes for each individual is provided.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The management and administration plan presents an acceptable model for the management of the school. Though not fully detailed, the roles and responsibilities of the board and the staff are sufficiently clear to avoid major problems. The plan provides a general framework for a solid management and administrative structure. All of the individuals described here have the experience and qualifications necessary to contribute to the school's mission and most of the contact information and resumes are provided.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The management and administration plan fails to present a clear understanding of what it takes to operate a public school. The roles and responsibilities of the leaders, the governing board, and others are not clearly defined. The organizational structure is not adequately explained or is ill-conceived. The background information presented on the individuals described here is inadequate and fails to demonstrate how each will contribute to the school; much of the contact information and resumes may be missing.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 5

16. Proposed by-laws

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The proposed by-laws are well thought out and will serve to ensure stability, continuity, and structure for the governing body of the charter school.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The proposed by-laws are concise and unambiguous and provide reasonable detail about the governing body's decision-making processes.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The proposed by-laws may be incomplete or missing.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 1

17. Assurance of liability

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The assurance of liability statement by the governing body is clear and detailed.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The assurance of liability statement by the governing board is minimal but acceptable.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The assurance of liability statement by the governing body is incomplete or missing.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 1

18. Insurance coverage

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The proposal demonstrates a strong risk management philosophy and approach to minimizing the liability of the school, its governing board, and its staff. Insurance coverage is excellent in all areas. Full contact information of the policy provider is presented and there is complete assurance that any cancellations or changes in policies will be presented to the department of education.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The proposal provides adequate evidence of insurance and a solid risk management plan. Contact information of the policy provider is presented and there is acceptable assurance that any cancellations or changes in policies will be presented to the department of education.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The proposal lacks a plan for risk management. The anticipated insurance coverage is inadequate or minimal. The contact information of the policy provider is incomplete. There is little assurance that any cancellations or changes in policies will be presented to the department of education.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 1

19. Transportation plan

(Note to reviewers: Schools are not required to provide transportation. Only rate a school on this item if it proposes to provide transportation.)

An **EXCELLENT** application:

The proposal presents a detailed, thorough, and realistic transportation plan that ensures that the school will be open and accessible to eligible students. The proposal presents a clear picture of vehicle type and use, drivers, and what students will be eligible. The transportation to be provided under the plan is likely to be safe, reliable, and affordable for the school.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The proposal provides a general description of anticipated transportation arrangements, though details remain to be worked out. The plan addresses in general terms vehicle type and use, drivers, and what students will be eligible. The transportation to be provided under the plan is likely to be safe, reliable, and affordable for the school.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The school elects to provide transportation but fails to present a transportation plan that addresses vehicle type and use, drivers, and passengers or meets expectations for safety, reliability, and affordability.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 2*

**the total points for this item consider both transportation and health and safety compliance (#11)*

20. Financial health and stability

An **EXCELLENT** application:

All statements and documentation provide clear details and evidence that the school will have the cash, liquid assets or other assurances to operate the school on an ongoing and sound financial basis. If the school's budget requires contributions of funds, goods, or services, the proposal sets forth clear commitments of or feasible plans for obtaining such resources. If the school's financial plan requires borrowing, the proposal specifies realistic sources of debt and reasonable terms of repayment.

An **ADEQUATE** application:

The statements and documentation demonstrate that the school will be able to open and operate with adequate resources. The proposal sets forth reasonable plans for obtaining any necessary contributions or debt financing.

An **INADEQUATE** application:

The proposal fails to present evidence of financial health and stability. The statements and documentation are incomplete, missing, or fail to successfully demonstrate financial viability. There is little evidence that needed contributions or debt financing can be obtained.

Total Possible Points Awarded for this Element: 1